

THE QUIVER

Saturday, December 5, 1868.



"Take care, darlint."—p. 132.

ESTHER WEST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PEGGY OGLIVIE'S INHERITANCE."

CHAPTER XVIII.—VIGILS.

GRADUALLY the sounds died away, the house grew quiet. One by one the lights went out in the windows. Esther took out her watch—Mrs. West's gift on her fifteenth birthday—and looked at

the hour by the light of the moon. It was a quarter past twelve. Little Mary had fallen into a deeper sleep, and lay quite still. Just then there floated up to her, also coming through one of the open windows,

the verse of a hymn, sang in a subdued voice, evidently a man's. It was too low to have reached the ear among the other murmurs which had filled the air an hour ago, but now in the silence it was quite distinct. She leaned to listen, but could not catch the words, with the exception of the refrain, plaintive in its monotony. It ran:

"On the other side of Jordan,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
There is rest for the weary!
There is rest for the weary!
There is rest for me!"

The hymn came to an end, and then followed a murmur which she knew was prayer. She heard no words, but involuntarily she bent her head, and paused from her own sad thoughts until it was over, and as she did so a sense of peace fell upon her troubled spirit. She had been feeling that her fate was hard, to be snatched out of a life of ease and refinement, where she had been surrounded with grace and beauty, where everything that was ungracious and unlovely was hidden out of sight, and plunged into the hard, ungracious, unlovely life she saw around her. She had not accepted such a life as her life. Her mother was good and gracious, and little Mary was very sweet, but she thought rather of lifting them out of their hard lot than of sharing it with them. There was the natural hope in her heart that the change was only temporary, that she would not be allowed to remain where she was, that her father would yield, and that she would go back to Mrs. West, and be allowed to help her mother and little Mary, and the rest, and make their lives more like what her own had hitherto been. Poor Esther, she did not take into account, sensible though she was, that suppers for ten do not cook themselves, except in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." But the thought troubled and oppressed her; nevertheless, that this life had been led by her mother and her sisters, that this lovely little Mary had grown up in the midst of it, and that it was the life of all these men, women, and children sleeping around her. "God lets them live this life, why should I be favoured? Why should I lead one seemingly so much richer, and easier, and happier; and with something higher in it, too, than the ease, and the fulness, and the happiness, for did not these give freedom to lead the nobler life of the mind and the spirit, from which those must be debarred who are shut in by the prison walls of circumstances to sordid thoughts and earthly desires?"

That hymn and prayer floating on the air of the close court from one of those dingy dwellings, came as an answer to these thoughts. Here was the outlet of the poor, meagre, dull, sordid life; an outlook whose horizon was heaven. Might it not contain possibilities of a loftier faith, as much loftier as its earthly basis was lower; of a nobler effort, as much nobler as its task was harder; of even a richer joy,

as much fuller and richer as it was emptier of mere earthly bliss? A feeling, nay almost a faith, that this was so, took possession of Esther's mind. One of those fruitful seeds of spiritual life, which fall as it were at random, had floated in on her soul from that human breath, and was destined to take root in its soil and flourish there. She found herself wondering who the singer was, and picturing to herself (a picture which she afterwards found to be utterly false) a man on the verge of the grave, whose hopes and aspirations were nigh to their realisation—the rest for which he longed.

At length she remembered that she had never heard her father return. The thought came with a slight noise heard within the house, the movement of some one anxious to move noiselessly. The street-door was underneath her window, and she then heard it opened and closed gently. The person admitted, however, had no thought of moving gently, but came in with a loud, and, she thought, uncertain step. Another door was closed, which muffled the sounds, but Esther could hear a harsh tone and angry words. She went to the door of her own room, and, opening it softly, stood upon the landing. There she could hear plainly the low pleading voice of her mother, alternating with that other voice of terror. Nothing, in the excited state of her nerves, seemed too terrible to happen now. She stood trembling and with clasped hands, ready to descend, and, if need be, die by the hands of a madman.

Mary Potter, during the hours of Esther's vigil, had had one of her own of unmingled bitterness. At first she had worked on with nimble fingers, and a heart only little more anxious than usual. She was, indeed, chiefly anxious to provide her poor, tired, sleepy Sarah with a place of rest, which, under the circumstances, could not be managed till all the rest had retired. But at length Sarah had gone to sleep on the sofa dressed as she was, and Mary still worked on, though with ever-growing apprehension of she knew not what terrible calamity in store for her.

At last she could work no longer, her fingers trembled at the task. Her whole soul was intent on waiting. Once or twice she raised her clasped hands from her knee, and looked upward, as if appealing to the Divine pity; but she uttered no word. Her tongue cleaved to the roof of her mouth. Time seemed lengthening out into eternity, an eternity of suffering—even that seemed conceivable then. Oh! if something had happened to Martin, and she should never see him again; if he passed in his estrangement out of the living world! Mary felt as if she would die gladly only to meet him reconciled. What were her children to her in comparison with him, her husband; and the days of his passionate wailing came back upon her, making her heart burn within her.

There was his step at last. She crept out of the

room and forgot, in her eagerness, to rouse her daughter and send her away. Yes, it was Martin, who went past her in the narrow passage with a heavy tread, and staggered in at the parlour door. Martin, her Martin, who had prided himself, and justly, on his sobriety, almost abstinence, who looked at her with those drunken eyes, that unnatural scowl, that expression which is next to madness in its horror.

He sat down and gazed at her with drunken defiance. Then he caught sight of Sarah, and cried, "What is that girl doing there?"

Martin was a temperate man, and, moreover, one of those men who cannot be intemperate with impunity, whom drink plunges into a state of irritation bordering on insanity. He seemed about to rise and seize upon the girl, when Mary interposed.

"Let her alone, Martin. She was very tired," pleaded the mother, "and I allowed her to fall asleep there while I was working." Not a reproach, not even an allusion to the lateness of the hour, passed Mary's lips—only she could not hide the pallor which had overspread her face from the faintness at her heart, nor conceal the frightened look in her eyes.

Whether or no he had sense to see these tokens of dread and to resent them, he grew worse than before. "Get up," he cried, and Sarah, roused from her sleep, looked up with a half-suppressed cry to see her father standing over her with an expression she had never seen before. She started up in alarm, and again he was about to seize her, perhaps only to thrust her out of the room, when Mary again interposed, with the terrible agony of fear in her eyes.

It is in such moments murder is done. Martin Potter gave his wife a push, and she staggered back against the window, whose sharp corner struck her head. The injury was not great, nor the physical pain more than Mary could bear, but the thrust had hurt her, and she wailed out, "Oh, Martin."

It seemed to sober him, for he muttered something about not meaning it, and added, "Go away to bed."

"Are you not coming?" she asked; "or will you take a bit of supper first?"

"No, I will take nothing; leave me here," was the response; and Mary was obliged to follow Sarah out of the room.

"You must go in beside Em and Aggy," said Mary, to the still sleep-bewildered girl; "your father is not well to-night."

She took a light and led Sarah up to her sisters' room, immediately below that of Esther's. Then there was a whispering there, and a murmur of awakened sleepers, and Sarah had found a refuge.

All this time Esther was standing leaning against the shabby stair-rail on the dark landing; but when her mother came out again, she ventured down a few steps. Mary started when she looked up and saw her. They looked in each other's pale and sorrowful faces, and each knew all the other had to tell. Mary laid her finger on her lips, and with an imploring

gesture motioned Esther to retire, she herself vanishing softly into her own room—but not to sleep, any more than her daughter; but to watch out the remainder of that miserable night. Once and again, when all was silent, she took her candle and stole down to see her husband in uneasy slumber, seated where she had left him, with flushed face and labouring breath. The third time she came the summer dawn was brightening in the sky. Her husband's face too had changed, and he looked haggard and worn. As she stood regarding him, he opened his eyes and met hers, so tender, so pitiful. He shut his again, murmuring, "I can't bear the light."

"Are you ill?" she asked, going up to him.

"My head is like to split," he answered.

She went still closer to him and bent over his chair. He suffered his head to rest on her bosom, and after a little, said, "It's the first and the last time, Mary."

The wife restrained her tears, restrained even her kisses, and only touched the bent head with her lips. "You will come up-stairs and go to bed for a few hours," she whispered, "and let me bring you a cup of tea. I would like one myself."

And Martin Potter rose and followed her, putting his hand to his brow, which throbbed at every step.

CHAPTER XIX.

PHILIP—EVANGELIST.

AFTER seeing her husband fall into an uneasy slumber, Mary had stolen softly up-stairs and into Esther's room, to find her on her knees before the bed with her face buried in her hands. Mary touched her gently, and she rose, with that strange startled look in her eyes which comes from being suddenly recalled from a state of concentrated emotion. "Why are you not in bed?" whispered her mother.

"I did not like to disturb her;" and Esther pointed to the little sleeper, stretched across the couch.

"That will never do," said her mother, lifting the child and laying her in her place without in the least awakening her. "Now you must go to rest. Your father has been very ill. It is the first time in his life that I have ever seen him so," she added, with a tact that met the truth, if the truth had occurred to Esther, as well as the half truth which she wished her to believe.

And after her mother left her, Esther, unaccustomed to watching, had fallen asleep in the dawn, and slept far into the morning.

When at length she awoke, the child was gone. She had been carried away at the hour when she usually rose by the ever-watchful Mary. Though the morning was far advanced, there was perfect silence in the house, and when Esther came down she was astonished to find that the household had been long astir. The two lads had taken their younger brothers, down to the mischief-loving Johnny, away

to the park, which partly accounted for the silence which prevailed. But even Sarah had been creeping about all the morning in a more than usually subdued manner. All had moved softly and spoken in whispers, as soon as the words had passed from one to another, "Father is ill."

Yes, Martin Potter was ill. But with the fierce resolution of his character he would not submit to be ill. He would wrestle with his suffering and overcome it. He did not know that his wife had kept the house quiet for him; he would have resented it if he had known that she did so, though he was ready enough on ordinary occasions to find fault with the noise. He would not lie still, though his head throbbed wildly and made every movement anguish; nor allow Mary to darken the room, though every ray of light shot through his eye-balls and seemed to scorch and wither his brain like fire. He would go out and "throw it off." So he said, and so he did.

"Wait a very little, Martin, and I will go with you," Mary had ventured to say.

"You think I'm not fit to be trusted," he answered, bitterly, and went away alone.

Emily and Agnes, disregarding a hint from their mother, that they might ask Esther to accompany them, went off together to church or chapel. They were disobeying their father in the spirit, though they stood in sufficient awe of him to obey in the letter of his commandments. They wore the white net bennets with an alteration. They had substituted white flowers for blue, and the effect was still sufficiently light and airy. Emily had sat up the night before making another out of the same cheap material, in the place of the one that had been hopelessly crushed. They had also resolved to keep out of their father's sight, and they rejoiced to see him depart. They had possessed themselves, moreover, of cheap lockets, whose long blue velvet ribbons were to be tied behind after they left the house. Since there was no longer necessity for concealment they put on their ornaments and went out boldly with their blue streamers. Mary sighed over the girls as she saw them go. They were the most untoward of her children. Doubtless they had friends of their own to meet—boy lovers, as is the custom of their class in London, for they flatly refused to allow little Mary to go with them.

Then Esther, seeing that the little one fretted to go out into the air and sunshine, volunteered to take her for a walk; so they sallied forth together, and were soon in Queen's Road, Chelsea. Esther had never lived in a city, had never even seen the poor quarter of a great town, and the road up which she allowed little Mary, in all the pride of superior knowledge of the locality, to lead her, was to her a revelation from the depths. Many of the shops were open and as busy as on a week day. There were cast-off garments hanging at the doors; stalls at which scraps of meat were being turned over by

dirty fingers—food, which sickened the girl even to look at. And the men and women, they looked as if they had not slept the night before; indeed, as if they never slept at all, so worn and weary were they. Then so foul too, without and within, that Esther caught away her little sister from contact and hearing with such haste that the child stumbled and would have fallen but for one of these dreadful beings from whom she shrank in terror and disgust. A bloated woman caught little Mary on the other side—an Irishwoman, for the brogue was strong in which she said, "Take care, darlint." Mary did not shrink, but smiled back in the woman's face, like the sunbeam she was. Esther felt something like rebuke from her little sister's childish confidence.

They were at a corner round which a little crowd had gathered. Some one was speaking in the midst of it. The crowd consisted of one or two men in fustian jackets, with short pipes in their mouths; several women, and a number of little children. Mary began pulling at Esther's hand. She evidently wanted her to join the crowd. "It's Philip," she cried, in explanation.

"And who is Philip?" said Esther, suffering herself to be led to the edge of the crowd.

That was beyond little Mary's powers. That it was Philip was enough for her, and she thought it ought to have been enough for the whole world. "He 'ith Philip," she repeated. And Esther found herself standing among the poor women.

The man in the midst had given out a hymn, and was proceeding to sing it. As soon as Esther heard the voice she recognised that of her neighbour, which had fascinated her the night before. This accounted for little Mary's knowledge of him. Esther longed to see him, but he was of small stature, and she was unwilling to press forward. She waited till the hymn was sung. Then, taking advantage of the elevation of a door-step, the preacher raised himself above the crowd and began to pray.

He was a small and slight young man, with a perfectly pale face, of which the features were boldly and finely cut; but over them, from time to time, passed a nervous twitching which was painful to Esther to look at. The hair was thin, and of a light golden brown, and he wore his beard of the same colour. It was a face full of keen intelligence. A passion of kindness beamed out of the full grey eyes. Now they were closed, and the white face took the rapt concentration of one who communes with the Invisible.

The sermon came next, and still Esther stood and listened. She could not help herself now, for little Mary who had slipped hold of her hand during the prayer, had gently wormed her way through the crowd, and was now standing at the preacher's knees with eyes intent upon his lips.

The discourse was very brief. It did not occupy more than five minutes. The preacher was not

eloquent. At first he spoke with hesitancy, and not without iteration; but he gained in power as he proceeded. Taking for his text the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," "I have not far to go to find those whom Christ invites," he said. "You are weary and heavy laden, all of you, unless you have come into this rest; and not you only, but all men, however easy and light their lives may seem to you. The rich are heavy laden with their riches, just as you are with your poverty, only they trust in their riches to give them rest, and you cannot trust in your poverty. No man can rest till he has found God, and save in Christ no man can find him, though he should search the whole universe. Except in Christ we cannot know the heart of God, his pity for us, his love to us. Therefore he only can give us rest; therefore he is our salvation, who verily died that we might live. For this rest is not the rest beyond the grave. It is a living rest, enabling us to carry every burden except sin; that burden we must lay down at the Saviour's feet; from that his power must loose us and let us go. Oh, brothers and sisters, how long will you carry that heavy burden? How long will you be weary, while he is waiting to give you rest?"

It was not so much the words that penetrated the hearts of the listeners. The same words, read or spoken, might have fallen as so many dead letters upon eye or ear; it was the spirit that breathed through them, and gave them the force of living realities. It was the intense conviction on the part of the speaker that he was holding forth to his hearers the word of life, the great truths that were spiritualising his own life, and lifting it above all weariness, and dullness, and earthliness, into a region of spiritual peace and joy. An atmosphere was around him, full of clearness and of sunshine, as that of the mountain-tops, and he was calling to the dwellers in a dark and fetid prison to come forth and share his light, and life, and joy. Esther felt herself irresistibly attracted to the preacher, with that subtle attraction which we feel towards some natures; that longing to enter into a communion of spirit with them to see as they see, to worship as they worship. When the brief sermon had come to an end in a few words of blessing, the little throng dispersed, and Mary, laying hold of the preacher's hand, bent her steps to his, leaving Esther to follow, which she did. As she walked on close behind them, she found herself trying to catch the words he was speaking to the child, but could not for the noises of the streets, so bewildering to an ear accustomed to the breathing calm of country ways.

At length they reached the river, and were about to cross the bridge, when Mary looked back, and Philip, following the child's eyes, encountered Esther's gaze.

"Had we not better go home, Mary?" she said. "I am afraid we shall lose ourselves."

She felt, rather than saw, that Philip was regarding her with a look of keen, but not impertinent, scrutiny. It was to his child companion, however, that he spoke. "Are you with this lady?" he asked.

Esther made answer, "I am her sister," while Mary lisped her "yes."

"I have never seen you," he replied, looking perplexed, "and I thought I had seen the whole family."

"I have been brought up away from home," she rejoined, colouring slightly.

"And are you going to live there now?" he asked, finding that in her manner and tone which he felt to be incongruous with the surroundings in Sutton Alley.

She hesitated, and then replied, "I think so."

"Then we shall be near neighbours," he said.

"It was you whom I heard singing last night?" she ventured to say.

"I hope I did not disturb you," was the reply.

"Oh, no," she answered, hastily; and then they all lapsed into silence, and stood looking on the lovely reach of river sweeping past the grounds of the old hospital. In a few minutes, during which Philip had seemed to have forgotten those who were standing beside him, he moved, and said, "I am going on now." Mary still clung to his hand.

"Ought we not to return home?" said Esther, gently. "I am afraid we shall not find our way back."

He stooped and questioned the child concerning her knowledge of the locality; and as she gave a very confused account of the way home, he offered to accompany them, at least for a part of it. "I was going to preach once more in the park," he said, "but I shall come out again in the afternoon."

Esther now conjectured that he was a missionary, though his dress was that of a common workman, and his ungloved hands looked hard and brown.

"Do you preach every day?" she asked, for they were proceeding in silence, Philip's manner, like his speech, having a kind of hesitancy, which sometimes broke into abruptness, and seemed to Esther, then, almost ungracious.

"No," he replied, in this manner of his, "I work at the forge on week days."

Again they marched on in silence—a silence which Esther would not break again.

"You have never lived in London?" he said, at length.

"Never," she answered. "I never saw such a sight as I have seen to-day. It is terrible. If preaching would save these men and women, I think every man, and every woman too, would be bound to preach to them."

"So I think," he answered. "'Do the work of an evangelist,' the hammer seems to ring it on the anvil all the week. But you doubt if preaching will

do it," he said, abruptly, almost sharply. "What do you think would save them?"

"We—" She forgot she was no longer rich; had no longer any title to, or claim on, riches. "We," she said, "must give up everything—all our wealth. It seems to me we must be willing to live and die for them to do them any good."

"Well, you're not so far wrong. I thought you were going to say better houses and better schools would save them, and I know that it won't. God meant men to live in good houses, no doubt. He never meant them to house worse than the beasts. He meant us all the physical good we are capable of, and he meant it for all; of that we may be quite sure. But he meant more than that; else there's no meaning in all this misery. He will not have life fair without and foul within. He will not let us be content with an animal's happiness. The misery does not come from without; you can't take it away by any social science whatever. These people would foul the fairest house you could put them into, and sicken themselves on the most wholesome fare. I know there are some who say, 'Improve the body, and the soul will improve;' but I take it the other way is the right one: Improve the soul, and the improvement of the body will follow."

Esther was listening with eyes bent on the ground,

little Mary, like the link between them, holding a hand of each.

"But how are their souls to be reached?" said she, earnestly. "Words are weak; and besides, they seem, as it were, to speak another language. I only meant that deeds might do more than words; that one could scarcely reach them with only words; that it would need some great sacrifice of ours to make them, in the faintest way, realise the sacrifice of Christ—our greatest love to make them understand the least of God's."

She spoke with kindling fervour and eloquence, as she had never spoken in her life before. The beautiful dawn of the spirit was on her cheeks and in her eyes.

There was an eagerness in the glance that sprang to meet hers. "You are ready, then, to give up all for Christ?" he cried.

Blunt, personal, impertinent, such words have been called before now, and such words are often spoken neither well nor wisely; but then they were exquisitely timed, as the stroke on the glowing iron. They vibrated through Esther's inmost heart.

"I," she said, startled, and in tears—"I have nothing to give."

"You have yourself," he said, gently; and lifting his hat, he murmured good-bye, and left her standing close to home. *(To be continued.)*

"CONSIDER THE LILIES."

THE summer, with its bright warm days and glorious sunshine, is already gone, and, yielding to the pressing advance of autumn, offers us but little longer time to go abroad into the highways and byways of God's creation, to observe the flower-world smiling and rejoicing under its genial influence; external nature once more threatens to sink to sleep, and to hide her tender nurslings from the cold and snow of winter; and thus it is, that ere the last flowerets fade from the fields, and the last bloom falls dishonoured from the hedgerows, the Bible bids us, in our blessed Lord's own words, "consider the lilies of the field."

"Consider." No merely passing look or thought is conveyed in this word, but an exhortation to ponder deeply upon the thoughts that are suggested by them, and the lessons that analogy bids us learn from them. Christ was so truly human, that any words he speaks cannot fail to come home to our hearts; he was so Divine, that nothing human which he spoke can fail to contain the divinest truths, and the most heavenly lessons. If we want in our generation to influence others, or if any one in the world, in any generation, hopes to reach human hearts, he must set about it in the

same way in which our blessed Saviour gave him so perfect an example: he must learn this first of all, that to influence men you must sympathise with them; and this it was, if anything more than another, that filled our Lord's words with such force and vitality, and gave him such success among the multitude, that even his enemies were forced to confess that never man spake as he did. The sermon on the mount is full of human sympathy, that speaks to us now with as much power as if we heard the words fall from our dear Saviour's own lips; and this sympathy expressed in words, appealing to those works of God which we see everywhere around us, leads us to try to look upon these with that mind which was in the Divine Preacher himself. This mind of our blessed Lord, assuming to itself every condition and phase of the human mind, did not despise, because of its omniscience, to arrive at the divinest truths by the most humble methods, or to rise step by step from the lowest capabilities to the highest; as he was content to grow in stature, so, too, he was willing to grow in wisdom from the innocent and simple intellect of the child to the mature and developed intellect of the man; in all things he became one of us, and stooping to the reach of our weak powers and capacities, he knew fully well how lessons

could best be inculcated, and convictions forced home to our hearts. Thus it is that we find him at one time preaching of the Church through the metaphor of a net, and this to fishermen; at another, of the good seed sown in various soils, which was the Word of God sown in the various hearts of men, and this to an agricultural people; at another, of the Good Shepherd, namely himself, to a pastoral people; and now he tells of a heavenly Father who is watching over every one of us, by reminding us of the care which this Father bestows upon the lilies of the field, and begs us to consider from these lilies what must be the love to ourselves, which is watching over every moment of our lives. The man that will go out into the country amidst the beauties and glories of God's creation, with his mind thus bent upon *considering* the lilies of the field, will, without doubt, come back a holier and a better man. Thousands upon thousands may look upon the same things unmoved, and feel nothing of that higher existence, which is wrapped up in the contemplation of God manifested in earth and air, sky and sea; but he, who according to Christ's own request, *considers* them, feels the hand of God upon him, round him, protecting him, feeding him, clothing him, and rises with soaring thoughts to higher and holier regions; and as the eagle gazes into the deep vault of heaven, so he, too, looks with uninterrupted gaze, for some brief but heavenly moments, into the full glory of his kind and merciful God revealed in love, and care, and all perfection—to such a one, I say, "the cattle upon a thousand hills" will be a new subject for thought; to him, at all events, the heavens will declare the glory of God, and the firmament show his handiwork; not in vain will the voices speak which are heard among the stars, the waves, the seas, the floods; but he will thank God that these mighty elements are subject to the Divine power, and that, tremendous as they are, "the wind and storm fulfil his word."

How soon, too, does the *consideration* of a flower lead to the consideration of man himself, and God's intention with regard to him! "Man is indeed a flower of the field." This we may be thankful for; but there is one point in which he is unlike, which demands more gratitude still: he is like, in that his thoughts perish and his glory fades away; he is unlike, in that he is made in the image of God, and that his soul cannot perish for ever, but shall continue, when heaven and earth have long passed away. And to renew the comparison, how sweetly the life of the flower illustrates that of the man; both being instances of that great eternal law of progress, which in increasing purpose runs through all ages. Compare for a moment a child with a flower-bud: in the rosebud lie secluded all the future beauties and qualities of the rose undeveloped, but fashioned, as it were, beneath in the

earth, carefully and elaborately, and soon to expand and blossom under the fostering influences of rain, dew, sun, and air. In the child, too, are latent the immature powers of heart and soul; there is undeveloped perfection are found memory, fancy, reason, and the affections stored up secretly by their wise Creator, gradually to enlarge and expand themselves beneath parents' kind culture, and the dawning light of truth. Would that more men and women in the world bethought themselves of God's intention for them, and of their fathers' and mothers' anxious care in their early childhood! then would there be more souls who would reach that high standard which God has empowered them to attain, and many an aching heart would now, with God's blessing upon it, be leading that life, which a father's anxious hopes and a loving mother's early prayers desired for it.

Any one who will, at this our Saviour's bidding, "*consider* the lilies of the field," cannot fail to be struck by the remarkable evidence in every feature of the creation, that God is chiefly manifested in mercy and goodness and love, and that his Divine power finds happiness and expression in creation, and in providing bountifully with beauty, health, life, vigour, and comeliness everything that he creates. And so it is that our widening knowledge of science continually reveals new beauties and fresh perfections in the commonest, as well as in the rarest, objects of this earth. Thus, too, it is, that shores on which man has never landed are strewn with millions upon millions of shells; fields where man's foot has never trod are adorned with the most beautiful and fragrant flowers; ocean-depths unfathomed are filled with stores of pearls, and caverns where man can never enter are radiant with the most brilliant gems. Thus, too, alas! it seems, it is why man himself is gifted with talents, powers, capacities, which he receives but to waste, and enjoys but to misuse. God made all things for himself, and consequently we find traces of beauty, which must have bloomed unobserved by man in all the various parts of the creation. Often we may wonder why a little flower, which with its colours and graceful petals surpasses the highest conceptions of man's device, should be left to "waste its sweetness on the desert air," upon some old ruined church-tower, for instance, in uninvaded solitude, or upon the projecting height of some lofty mountain; and while we make all allowance for the delight with which the bees and other winged creatures of the air hover around its honeyed stores, and confess that we know not what charms it may have for beings of the unseen world, still, if we do not remember that for himself God created all things, we should at once be baffled and disappointed in our inquiries into his Divine work upon earth.

Those people lose the blessing of a very holy in-

fluence on their souls, who never reach that capability of rapture of their senses which reposes with pleasure upon the beautiful. It is indeed a joy for all to gaze on the various forms in which the All-beautiful has concealed himself; it is pure delight. But all this is bounded; it is finite. Considering the lilies and beauties of the field does not teach us only to scan them, but it reminds us of "the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off;" and yet, while we are gazing, melancholy mingles with our joy, for we feel that all this beauty of flower and field, of earth and sky, is only transient, fleeting, fading—not that eternal loveliness for which our spirits pant. When Christ came, man's eye could not see in him, any more than they could in God's works around them, those things which God hath prepared for those that love him. "He had no form nor comeliness; and when they saw him, there was no beauty that they should desire him:" but if, by consideration of God manifest in the works of his own hands, as in the lilies, the ravens, the sheep, the fowls of the air, they had learnt more to look upon themselves in the spirit of sons of a heavenly Father, then they would have hailed Christ's coming as one with whom they were to be joint-heirs of a glory which fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens.

This filial use, then, of God's gifts to us, is our Lord's teaching; may we profit by it, and the more we follow him in his footsteps, and act up to his example, the more shall we see into that

kingdom of God, which is everywhere around us. Consider, dwell upon the flowers of the field, and you will have one more ray of light shed upon the page of your Bible; you will reflect how God is a Father to us, and takes care of us, and that in all our occupations, if we rest content with that station in which he has put us, he guides and blesses us, and that, if he so clothe the flower of the field, surely his love must be infinitely greater to those whom he accepts as his own sons. And then again we shall feel that, if at other times God is present with us, so, too, is he at hand in our trials and temptations; and feeling this we shall know that there is a way of escape, which he in his goodness has prepared for those who love him.

Consider, then, while yet there is time, the lilies of the field; think how often lower and darker thoughts are expelled and driven away by the look of a flower, or the carol of a bird, and higher and holier ones roused to replace them; think how our growth in grace is symbolised in the growth of the flower, and remember how anxiously God is watching each of our hearts: pray for a trustful heart, that commits all its ways fearlessly to God; bear all, endure all, and in the end be saved; use all God's gifts aright, learn what lessons outward nature can teach, and thus, daily conforming ourselves to God's fatherly will, we shall in the end obtain the glorious inheritance, which he has laid up for his loving children from the beginning of the world.

H. ROWSELL.

NOTES ON WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

THAT was a pleasant fiction of Le Sage's, in the "Diable Boiteux," by which Asmodeus is made to open the roofs of the houses, and display to his companion the domestic history of their inmates. He who wanders through the crowd of tombs that throng the abbey where courtiers rest from their flatteries, warriors from their warfare, and statesmen from their intrigues; where the tongue of the orator is as silent as the lyre of the poet; where the light is quenched in the eye of genius, and the bloom is faded from the cheek of beauty—he who so wanders would gladly have some attendant in the flesh or in the spirit to perform for him a similar kind office, and, rolling away marble slab and low-lying grave-stones, bid the great dead be resurgent, and tell the stories of their lives.

The last comparison which we should think of making would be between Asmodeus and Dean Stanley; we should prefer to liken him to Virgil, who, escorting Dante in the region of the dead, stays the wandering spirits in their flight, and

draws from them the tale of their earthly existence. Many such historic episodes are to be found in the chapters which the dean devotes to the consideration of those monuments of the greatest, the best, and the most renowned of the English people, which make Westminster dearer and worthier in the eyes of the nation than even the cenotaphs of her kings. What a galaxy of great men illuminate the Elizabethan era, though one has to seek them in various localities: the Russells, the Cecils, the Norrises, and the Veres. The widow of Sir Frances de Vere erected a tomb here to his memory with four kneeling knights supporting the arms of the dead warrior, who lies beneath. It is said that Roubiliac was foused standing with folded arms and eyes riveted on the fourth of these knights, whose lips seemed just opening to address the bystander. "Hush! hush!" said the sculptor, "he will speak presently!"

The Villierses illustrate the reign of the first Charles with the elaborate tomb of George, Duke of Buckingham, intruding upon the resting-place of kings, in the chapel of Henry VII.; while Pym,



INTERIOR VIEW OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

and Essex, and Blake represent the régime of the Commonwealth in the senate, in the field, and on the sea. The tombs of Godolphin, the Marlboroughs, and Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, bring us to the reign of Anne. Sheffield, both as a soldier and a statesman, has historic claims, and is ranked amongst English poets by Johnson.* He was the accepted lover of his future sovereign, and married the natural daughter of James II. His widow took care that his funeral should be "as magnificent as that of the great Duke of Marlborough, and his monument as splendid as the Italian taste of that pedantic age could make it."

However the dead, or their memorials, may throng chapel, nave, and aisle without distinction of time or place, of class, or order, there are two localities especially consecrated each to its own speciality. In the northern transept are the statesmen of England. Here reposes the great Earl of Chatham, over whose body, claiming the honour of its sepulture, St. Paul's and St. Peter's contended, as did the Greeks and Trojans over the body of Patroclus. It was fitly decided that he whose intellect guided, and even coerced kings, should in death be brought "near the dust of kings." "Here," as Junius wrote, "recorded honours still gather round his monument, and thicken over him." "High over those venerable graves," says Macaulay, "towers the stately monument of Chatham, and from above, his effigy, graven by a cunning hand, seems still, with eagle face and outstretched arm, to bid England be of good cheer, and to hurl defiance at her foes." It is noteworthy that the sculptor Bacon, who wrought the statue, wrote the inscription. "Now, Bacon," said George III., when giving his approval to the latter, "mind you don't turn author, but stick to your chisel." The honestest and the ablest of Ireland's patriots and statesmen lies here, though his dying wishes turned to the quiet little churchyard of Moyanna, on the estate which the gratitude of the Irish people had purchased for him. "The coffin nearly touched the foot of the coffin of Fox, whom in life he so dearly valued, and near whom it would have been his pride to lie." Here, too, in peaceful proximity, repose from their political warfare, the rival statesmen, Pitt and Fox, Castlereagh and Canning, and Palmerston, the latest of those rulers of their country—the premiers of England—full of years and of

honours. "As the coffin sank into the grave, which contained the recollections of his long career, and left so new a field open for his successors, a dark storm brok over the abbey, in which, as in a black shroud, the whole circle of mourners seemed to vanish from the sight, till the ray of the returning sun, as the service drew to an end, once more reanimated the scene."

Ere we thread our way through the frequent tombs of the other great dead, let us remember one who has just passed away in a land where he loved to repose in literary and philosophic contemplation during much of his last years. Where, amid this venerable assemblage, is the memorial of Henry, Lord Brougham, to take its place? The voice of the people, by their representatives in that house where his eloquence so often rang, have demanded that his monument shall be placed in Westminster Hall. Let us hope that notwithstanding the many difficulties of arrangement, a place may be found worthy of that energetic and versatile genius, than whom, to adopt the recent words of Mr. Disraeli "no one has contributed more to the progress of the times in which he lived."

Is there any man or woman in London—we are almost tempted to add, or out of it—who has not heard of the "Poets' Corner?" Has anybody ever been in Westminster Abbey without having visited it? If there be such a one, we should like to see that zoological specimen. We may do homage to kings, and venerate statesmen—or the contrary—and admire warriors, but we love poets, from the child that can lisp a nursery rhyme to the man who can master the deep philosophy of Shakespeare or Milton. Let us cross over, then, to the south transept, and tread reverently among those great dead.

For whom first should we look but for him who is rightly called the father of English poetry, "the well of English undefiled"—Geoffrey Chaucer? whom his contemporaries called "the chief poete of Britanie," "the flour of poetes." A double right has he to be here, for he lived and died within the precincts of the abbey, his house and garden having occupied a portion of the ground on which the chapel of Henry VII. now stands. As the Confessor gathered kings and courtiers about him, and Chatham the statesmen, so Chaucer attracted the poets and the men of letters. On either side of him are Cowley and Phillips, while at the south-eastern entrance is a cluster of great names—Jonson, Butler, Milton, Gray, and Spenser. This last was the first who sought the company of the great master. "His hearse was attended by poets, and mournful elegies and poems, with the pens that wrote them, were thrown into his tomb. What a funeral was that, at which Beaumont, Fletcher, Jonson, and, in all probability, Shakespeare attended!

* It is evident, however, that the doctor had so very high opinion of Sheffield's poetic powers. He concludes the biography with the remark that "he had the perspicuity and elegance of an historian, but not the fire and fancy of a poet." Boswell, by the way, in connection with Sheffield's comedy of "The Rehearsal," gives an amusing illustration of the great doctor's magniloquence. "It has not wit enough," he observed, "to keep it sweet;" but immediately correcting himself, he pronounced a more rounded sentence: "It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction." There are few that will not prefer the Saxon vigour of the unpremeditated sentence.

What a grave in which the pen of Shakespeare may be mouldering away!" Jonson was not buried here, but in the north aisle of the nave, standing upright, as it was said, awaiting the resurrection. Every one knows the story that Aubrey tells of the inscription, "O rare Ben Jonson," on the slab of marble that marks his grave, how it "was done at the charge of Jack Young (afterwards knighted), who, walking there when the grave was covering, gave the fellow eighteen pence to cut it." Upon the authority of Mr. Frank Buckland, the dean adds a more interesting fact: "When, in 1849, Sir Robert Wilson was buried close by, the loose sand of Jonson's grave rippled in like a quicksand, and the clerk saw the two leg-bones of Jonson fixed bolt upright in the sand, as though the body had been buried in the upright position; and the skull came rolling down among the sand from a position above the leg-bones, to the bottom of the newly-made grave. There was still hair upon it, and it was of a red colour. It was seen once more, on the digging of John Hunter's grave, and it had still traces of red hair upon it." With a peculiar fitness, "glorious John Dryden" lies close to Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of modern English poetry beside the father of ancient English poetry, whose grave-stone was actually sawn asunder to make room for Dryden's monument.

Many of our great poets rest elsewhere, and, for some of them, one scarcely could wish it otherwise. Shakespeare, unapproachable in his genius, lies alone in his native Stratford; Gray, in the "country churchyard" of Stoke Pogis—a charming walk, by the way, it is on a summer's day from Windsor, where one passes through the green-sward from the humble tomb to the mausoleum near at hand—Burns at Dumfries; Scott at Dryburgh; Byron at Newstead; Southey at Keswick; Wordsworth at Grassmere; and dear Noll Goldsmith in the Temple. It is well that this should be so. "These great graves far away," as Dean Stanley finely observes, "are the poets' corners of a yet vaster temple; or, may we take it yet another way, and say that Stratford-on-Avon, Dryburgh, Stoke Pogis, and Grassmere are chapels of ease, united by invisible cloisters with Westminster Abbey itself?"

Before we part with the dead, let us pass to the outlying church of St. Margaret's to notice two who lie there, both memorable men—Sir Walter Raleigh and William Caxton. The night before the brave but hapless soldier was executed, he was lodged in the public prison of Westminster, formerly the gatehouse of the monastery. The following record of his later hours in prison, in a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, is profoundly interesting: "At his coming out of his lodging in the Tower to goe towards the King's Benche on

Wednesday was sevenight, his barber-surgeon said unto him, 'Sir, we have forgotte to combe your head this morning.' 'Let them kempe it,' quoth Sir Walter, 'that shall have it.' But, Peeter,' said he, 'canst thou give me a plaister to sett on a man's head when it is off?' He came to his death," continues the writer, "upon all disadvantages, exercised with an ague, having but a day's warning to prepare to dye, being putt into a very uneasy and inconvenient lodging in the gatehouse, and there being watched up by his friends and keepers all the night. About four o'clock in the morning a cousin of his, Mr. Charles Thynne, coming to see him, Sir Walter, finding him sad, began to be very pleasant with him, whereupon Mr. Thynne counselled him, 'Sir, take heed you goe not too muche upon the brave hand, for your enemies will take exceptions to that.' 'Good Charles,' quoth he, 'give me leave to be mery, for this is the last merriment that ever I shall have in this worlde; but when I come to the sad parte, thou shalt see I will looke on it as a man:' and so he was as good as his worde."

This same prison, by the way, held many another remarkable man. Lovelace wrote there his beautiful verses,

"Stone walls do not a prison make,"

which it would be an impertinence to quote. Hampden and Sir John Elliot were also its inmates, and poor little Geoffrey Hudson, the dwarf-knight and duellist, contrived to magnify himself into the importance of a Popish conspirator, and to find a prison larger and more durable than the royal pie. Captain Bell tells us how he obtained there an enforced leisure to translate Luther's "Table-Talk." "About six weeks," he says, "after I had received the same book, it fell out that one night, between twelve and one of the clock, there appeared unto me an ancient man, standing at my bedside, arrayed all in white, having a long and broad white beard hanging down to his girdle, who, taking me by my right ear, spoke these words following to me, 'Sirrah, will you not take time to translate that book which was sent to you out of Germany? I will shortly provide for you both place and time to do it.' And then he vanished away out of my sight." Then he tells how, about a fortnight after, when "sitting down to dinner with my wife, two messengers were sent from the Privy Council board with a warrant to carry me to the keeper of the Gatehouse, Westminster. Upon which said warrant I was kept these ten whole years close prisoner, where I spent five years thereof in translating the said book, insomuch that I found the words very true which the old man in the foresaid vision did say unto me."

William Caxton, a name venerable to every Englishman, set up his printing-press, the first in

England, near the house which, according to tradition, he occupied in the Almonry by the Chapel of St. Anne, and, with his rude Gothic type, laid the foundations of that mighty lever which, more potent than aught that Archimedes ever dreamed of, was to move the world.

Not without some deep significance, we would think—if it be not a fond conceit to think so—was it that in the councils of God the church was chosen as the Bethlehem wherein to cradle this messiah of civilisation. "The Church," says Dean Stanley, reversing the sentiment of Victor Hugo, that the Book killed the Church, "has given life to the Book. In this sense, if in no other, Westminster Abbey has been the source of enlightenment to England beyond any other spot in the empire." Yes, the Church need never fear the printing-press: for the truth need never shun the light.

And now we have done with the dead. Before we leave the abbey we would contemplate it under another and a different aspect, yet still one of solemnity and religion—when all is brightness, and hope, and joy within its sacred walls, and the wave of banners, and the blare of trumpets, and at last the shouts of loyal voices proclaim the sovereign. So far back as the eleventh century Westminster Abbey was the scene of the coronation of British monarchs. There, upon Christmas Day, 1066, William of Normandy, standing before the high altar, on the very grave-stone of Edward the Confessor, received upon his head the golden crown from the hands of Alred, the Saxon Archbishop of York. For the first time in his life he trembled from head to foot; for the Normans mistook the acclamation of the multitude for an uprising, and set fire to the abbey, and in the confusion many of his new subjects were trampled under the hoofs of the Norman horses. Thenceforth the ceremony of the coronation has been inalienably attached to the abbey.

How varied were the feelings, how varied the circumstances, how varied the fortunes of those who there received the symbols of royalty and the homage of the nation! The coronations are a part of our history—the history of race, of dynasty, and of religion. Still, there is much truth in the remark of Dean Stanley, that they are but as the outward wave of English history. "They break over the abbey as they break over the country, without leaving any permanent mark. With the two exceptions of the stone of Scone and the banners of the Knights of the Bath, they have left no trace in the structure of the building, unless where the scaffolding has torn away some honoured monument or the decoration of some ancient column. They belong to the form of history, and not to its substance." Of this coronation stone, its legends and its history, we have from Dean

Stanley all that can be extracted from archive or antiquary.

One would willingly linger over this pleasant and instructive chapter of coronations. We must content ourselves with noticing the ceremonials of two monarchs, both queens—Elizabeth and Victoria. That of the former we shall give in the words of Froude; that of the latter is felicitously as well as feelingly told by the present historian of the abbey. "As Elizabeth passed out of her carriage under the gates of the Tower, fraught to her with such stern remembrances, she stood still, looked up to heaven and said, 'O Lord Almighty and Everlasting God, I give thee most humble thanks that thou hast been so merciful unto me as to spare me to behold this joyful day; and I acknowledge that thou hast dealt wonderfully and mercifully with me. As thou didst with thy servant Daniel the prophet, whom thou deliverest out of the den from the cruelty of the raging lions, even so was I overwhelmed, and only by thee delivered. To thee, therefore, only be thanks, honour, and praise for ever. Amen.' She then took her seat and passed on—passed on through thronged streets and crowded balconies, amidst a people to whom her accession was as the rising of the sun. Away in the country the Protestants were few and the Catholics many. But the Londoners were the first-born of the Reformation, whom the lurid fires of Smithfield had worked only into fiercer convictions. The aldermen wept for joy as she went by. Groups of children waited for her with their little songs at the crosses and conduits. Poor women, though it was midwinter, flung nosegays into her lap. In Cheapside the Corporation presented her with an English Bible. She kissed it, thanking the City for their goodly gift, and saying she would diligently read therein. One of the crowd recollecting who first gave the Bible to England, exclaimed, 'Remember old King Harry the Eighth!' And a gleam of light passed over Elizabeth's face. 'A natural child,' says Hollingshed, 'who, at the very remembrance of her father's name, took so great a joy that all men may well think that, as she rejoiced at his name whom the realm doth still hold in so worthy memory, so in her doings she will resemble the same.' Near three hundred years had run their course since that day. The dynasty of the Tudors passed away with her, and that of the Stuarts had been succeeded by the house of Hanover, when, on the 28th of June, 1838, a scion of that stock was called upon to proceed to the ancient crowning-place of the British sovereigns, to swear fidelity to the constitution which she was bound to maintain, and the religion which placed her sires upon the throne. "The last coronation," writes the dean, "doubtless still lives in the recollection of all who witnessed it. They will long remember the early

summer morning, when at break of day the streets were thronged and the vast city awake; the first sight of the abbey, crowded with the mass of gorgeous spectators, themselves a pageant; the electric shock through the whole mass when the first gun announced that the Queen was on her way, and the thrill of expectation with which the iron rails seemed to tremble in the hands of the spectators as the long procession closed with the entrance of the small figure, marked out from all beside by the regal train and attendants, floating like a crimson and silvery cloud behind her. At the moment when she first came within the full view of the abbey, and paused as if for breath, with clasped hands; as she moved on to her place by the altar; as in the deep silence of the vast multitude, the tremulous voice of Archbishop Howley could be faintly heard, even to the remotest corners of the choir, asking for the recognition; as she sat immovable on the throne; when the crown touched her head, amidst shout and trumpet and the roar of cannon, there must

have been many who felt the hope that the loyalty which had waxed cold in the preceding reigns would once more revive in a more serious form than it had ever worn before."

We have good reason to congratulate our age that the history of Westminster Abbey has been committed to the present dean. At once an official duty and a labour of love, he has discharged his task with the taste and erudition of a scholar, and the zeal of a patriot, who felt that the honour of his country was in part in his hands. It is true he may not have added much to our previous knowledge. Inquiring minds and antiquarian industry have been before him, and have left him but little to exhume; but he has, in the happiest manner, collected the dis-severed materials which lay scattered apart, and almost inaccessible, and given them a sequence and congruity that makes all intelligible, and enriched it with a felicity of illustration and a vigour and originality of thought that makes his book a work to live.

TRAVELLING THROUGH ANGLESEY.

AND thus I draw near home! and tower,
and spire,
Lake, stream, and Alp, have settled slowly
down

In the wide wake of Distance, to a dream;
How little's here, meantime, to take their place!
Broad plashes, and bleak plains, by heron's wings
Flapped dismally; where the low-thatched hut
Crouches o'er poverty, and makes no sign.
All's left behind, save one most lustrous thing,
Swung through the heavens, and sailing at my side.
Save two bright things—the moon, and Memory—
Careering side by side, and at my side,
Out of the Far towards home.—Till we approach
The second gulf betwixt my friends and me.
And then one lustre fails me—slides away

Under the land and sea—slides slowly down
Beneath the slow up-sliding of the Earth,
That rolls its muffled thunder towards the moon.
One lustre dies—but then the other lives,
Winnowing from heaven upon the moonless void
Her chastened light—for she is Memory.
What though abysses of sombrous cloud be here!
With the clean cleavage of her sacred wing
She puts the gloom aside, and holds her way,
As I hold mine, on, ever, towards the home
Where Duty dwells, in exiled Comfort's place;
There to alight, as I must there abide,
Linked to beloved ones by that slender wire
She hath uncoiled, and hung from heart to heart,
Along which trembles Thought—though no step
treads.

THE PIC-NIC PARTY.

I DO wish that you would attend to your lessons, Laura," said Mrs. Stanley, who, on account of her husband having experienced some losses in business, had found it necessary to undertake the task of instructing her daughters herself, instead of employing the services of a governess. "I wish you would attend to your studies, and not keep looking out of the window, as you have been doing for the last ten minutes; and here is your French exercise so shamefully scribbled that it is

almost illegible. I shall have it written again, in a very different manner from this, before luncheon-time."

"Oh, mamma! I really cannot help it. You know that the pic-nic at Coniston will be to-morrow, and I cannot think of anything to-day. Do you think it will be fine, mamma?"

"It is impossible to foretell the weather in this uncertain climate; but I am sorry to see that you possess so little self-restraint, Laura; and I must say, that I regret your having received the invitation,

as the effect of it has been to make you idle and irritable ever since it arrived."

"I will try to do better, mamma. But the day is so near now, and it will be so delightful to go, and so terrible to be disappointed, and there is a cloud rising! Oh, what shall I do if it should rain? Will you take us if it does, mamma?"

"Certainly not, child; a pic-nic in the rain would be very deplorable," said Mrs. Stanley, smiling; and Bella smiled too.

"Oh, ma!" said she, "I hope it will not rain."

"What! my patient Bella, too? Is she so set upon this party? Do you not know, my dears, that whether we go or not, it will be for the best?"

"Oh, I hate that saying!" cried the impetuous Laura. "Nurse Simpson is always repeating it, and I hate to hear her. How is it for the best that papa has had to give up the carriage, and now we have nothing but the pony-chaise to take us to the railway, which is five miles off? And if the wind should be chilly, and it is only the middle of May, you might take cold, mamma."

"We cannot always understand the dispensations of Providence, but time will show us the justice of them, and then we shall see that all is really for the best."

Mrs. Stanley being just then called out of the room, to speak to some one, Laura threw herself back in her chair, and sat kicking her foot against the pedestal of the table, until the shaking disturbed Bella, who was perseveringly endeavouring to get through her German translation.

"Don't shake the table, pray, Laura," said she. "Why do you not either learn your lessons or write your exercise, as mamma desired you to do?"

"I can't understand the rule."

"Then I will explain it to you. Come, bring the book to me," said Bella, good-naturedly.

But Laura's impatience was not to be conquered; she threw the book to her sister, saying, "You really provoke me to see you so quiet and so cool, when we are going to have such a treat to-morrow. To-morrow! How I wish it were to-day! The time seems so long."

"Employment would make it appear shorter," returned Bella.

"Do you think so? Then I will try." So saying, Laura took slate and pencil, and began to listen to Bella's explanation of the rule; but before it was concluded she snatched the book away, took up her slate, and commenced writing as fast as she possibly could, the consequence of which was that when Mrs. Stanley returned, she found the exercise no better than before, and insisted on its being written a third time; and it was only by means of Bella's kind assistance and supervision that it was completed within the time prescribed.

"Oh, Bella, make haste and get up; it's a lovely morning!" cried Laura, as she pulled aside the

window-curtains. "The sun is shining, and the birds are singing; we shall have a glorious day. Make haste! we are to start at ten o'clock, to catch the train at eleven. Will it not be charming? We shall be at Coniston by half-past eleven. It is only ten miles, and the train goes so fast."

"Not faster than your tongue, I think, Laura," said Bell, dressing herself, however, with great alacrity.

"It really is splendid weather. Coniston will be delightful, indeed; and papa is to meet us there, and we shall all return together. Oh, yes! Dear papa; he has been away a whole month. How I do long to see him again," said Laura.

The girls did not linger over their breakfast, but ran away as soon as it was over, to get ready for the excursion, while Mrs. Stanley went into the hall to speak to old Thomas, the groom, gardener, and factotum, who was at present their only man-servant, and who had requested to see her. In about ten minutes, she re-entered the room where Bella and Laura were putting on their white frocks and blue sashes. Looking rather grave, she said—

"My dears, I am sorry to have to announce a disappointment to you; but we cannot go to Coniston to-day."

"Not go!" cried both the girls at once.

"No; we cannot go. The pony is lame. Thomas thinks he got a sprain when Farmer Smith took him to Alford, last Monday."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried Laura, as she burst into a passion of weeping. "Such a beautiful day, too. Oh! I cannot bear it! It is dreadful!"

"Calm yourself, Laura, and recollect that this excitement will do no good; and possibly, after all, it is for the best."

"No, it is not—it is not!" cried Laura, stamping wildly. "It is enough to drive one mad!"

Conceiving it best to leave Laura to herself for a time, Mrs. Stanley quitted the room, motioning to Bella to follow. The latter, on joining her, said, "It is a sad disappointment, mamma, and papa will wonder why we are not there." A little sigh escaped as she thought of this; then, suddenly brightening up, she said, "But Jessie and Mary Green were to have gone with us; they will be disappointed too. May I go and ask them to spend the day here?"

"You may, my dear; it will be the best way."

When Bella returned with Jessie and Mary Green, she left them in the breakfast-room while she went in search of Laura, whom she found sitting disconsolately where she had left her, with her hair in disorder, and her muslin frock in a tumbled heap upon the floor. Having said everything she could think of to comfort her, and assisted her to put on her ordinary attire, Bella returned to her visitors, hoping that in a short time Laura would join them.

"Now, my dears," said Mrs. Stanley, "you must amuse yourselves for an hour or two, while I go and

order an early dinner, and attend to some domestic affairs."

"Will you allow us to have that new story-book, with the beautiful pictures in it, that papa brought home last winter?" said Bella.

"With pleasure; for we must do all we can to console Jessie and Mary for their disappointment."

"We do not mind it at all," said Jessie, "now that Bella has brought us to Myrtle Grove. We shall be quite as happy here, as if we had gone to Coniston."

And very pleasant they found it, sitting under the shade of the verandah, with its twining honeysuckles over their heads, and inhaling the perfume of the pink hawthorn that grew in the shrubbery close by, doing their fancy work, and listening to Bella as she read a number of amusing stories from the handsome morocco-bound book. Then Bella played and sang, and Jessie and Mary played a duet, and they went and looked at the lop-eared rabbits, and the young canaries in the conservatory; afterwards they played with the three pet kittens. Nothing marred their happiness but the sight of Laura, who had come down, but would do nothing but sit leaning her head on her hand, looking quite melancholy. In vain they tried to coax and persuade her to join in their amusements, she only shook her head in a woe-begone manner, while the tears welled up into her eyes; so at last they left her to herself, and kept close to Bella, who, in her efforts to amuse her young guests, had almost forgotten her own troubles, for nothing so effectually alleviates our sorrows as trying earnestly to contribute to the happiness of others.

While the others were looking at the flowers and birds in the conservatory, Laura ran to Nurse Simpson, to utter her complaints to her.

After listening for some time, nurse, who was busy darning stockings, said, "Well, but I doesn't see as how it's any worse for you, Miss Laura, than for your mamma and Miss Bella."

"Mamma is grown up, and does not mind little disappointments, and Bella is turned fourteen, while I am only twelve years of age."

"But Miss Jessie and Miss Mary Green are no older than you, and they don't put themselves so out of the way."

"It is a treat for them to come here, so they don't mind so much about Coniston," returned Laura.

"Well, I's had many a disappointment in my time, a sight worse ones, and harder to bear than just losing a party; and I sees now that they was——"

"I know what you are going to say, but I don't believe it."

"You may some day, miss."

"I never shall!" replied Laura, passionately; little knowing what events were in store.

Not finding nurse quite so sympathetic as she ex-

pected, Laura returned to the drawing-room, where her mamma was now assisting Bella to amuse her young visitors.

After tea they walked in the grounds, and ran races on the lawn, and laughed heartily at the gambols of Drake, Bella's brown spaniel, who ran with them, and barked joyously when he had won the race. Even Laura, whose ill-temper had begun to evaporate, could not help joining in the fun.

Then they sat to rest under the beech-trees, and watched the beautiful red and orange-tinted clouds amid which the sun was setting.

After a while, Bella said, "Mamma, do you not think that if we walked down the lane, we might meet papa? May we go?"

"By all means, my love, and I will sit here a little longer; for the evening is lovely."

On reaching the lane which led to the high road, they proceeded along it, till they arrived at the copse, with its beautiful green mossy paths, tufted with the yellow primroses. They busied themselves in filling their baskets with the star-like blossoms, that they might replenish the vases on Mrs. Stanley's dressing-table.

After they had strolled about and amused themselves for some time, Bella, said she thought it was time for them to return.

At the top of the lane, they met Mrs. Stanley, who they thought looked rather pale.

"Have you seen your papa?" asked she.

"No, mamma," they answered, "we saw nothing of him."

"I wonder he has not arrived," said Bella, anxiously. "What can those people be hurrying along for?"

In fact, had they not been so busy filling their baskets with flowers, they would have observed that numbers of country people were thronging the road that led to Alford.

"Mamma," said Bella again, "I heard those people who passed us say something about an accident. Do you think that there has been one on the railway?"

The light faded from Mrs. Stanley's eyes, and she was very pale, as she answered, "I trust not; but let us return home, and I will send some one to inquire."

In the avenue they met old Thomas, who said, "If you please, ma'am, Mr. Green's servant has come to fetch the young ladies, and he says as there has been som'ut the matter on the line, but no partiklars is known as yet."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Bella and Laura, in a breath, "if papa were in the train——"

"God forbid!" said Mrs. Stanley, fervently; "but let us not anticipate evil. What time is it, Thomas?" she inquired.

"Just upon nine, ma'am. Master ought to have been home an hour ago."

"He may have stayed to assist the wounded. Where did the accident happen?"

"Somewheres between Coniston and Alford; the train fell over the embankment, I believe," said Thomas, who evidently feared to communicate all he knew.

"Were many of the passengers hurt?" asked Mrs. Stanley.

"I fear so," returned the old man, hesitatingly, for the ghastly looks of both his mistress and her young daughters were more than he could bear. "I will go over to Alford and inquire," said he, and left the room. In a few minutes he returned, saying, "Frank Purkis has come in—he has just returned from Alford."

"Show him in at once," replied Mrs. Stanley.

Frank informed them that he had been to Coniston with some poultry and other things that were ordered, and saw Mr. Stanley there, at three o'clock in the afternoon. That he (Frank) had returned by the half-past three train, and remained on business at Alford till the news of the accident arrived; that then he walked down the line to the scene of the disaster. The accident was terrific; many of the carriages were literally smashed. They had not yet recovered all the bodies. He had seen nothing of Mr. Stanley—he was not among the safe or the wounded.

It was a fearful blow. With a cry, Laura threw herself upon the ground, sobbing, "Papa! papa!"

Bella threw her arms round her mother, who seemed on the point of fainting. However, she recovered herself, and said, "Let us not give up hope. Let us pray that God may send your papa home quickly; if"—Mrs. Stanley hesitated to finish the sentence—"if not, we must pray to be enabled to bear his will."

For the next hour Laura sat sobbing at the window, and Bella and Mrs. Stanley watched. For what? They in their hearts felt little doubt as to the fate of the husband and father. Still, for her children's sake, Mrs. Stanley endeavoured to maintain composure.

"Laura, you had better go to bed," said she; "you will only make yourself ill."

"Pray!—pray! let me stay!" cried the weeping child; "indeed, I will be quiet, and not disturb you."

For another long, endless hour they again sat watching the avenue, across which the moonbeams fell, and the shadows of the branches flickered. A nightingale was singing in a neighbouring thicket, the scent of the hawthorn penetrated the room, for the windows were still unclosed. Laura's three pet kittens were frisking under the verandah in the bright moonlight. All was loveliness without, the very sweetness and calmness of Nature seemed to mock their misery, as they continued to gaze in agonised expectation of the mournful procession that

they dreaded to see. Thomas came in to light the lamp, but Bella motioned to him not to do it; she felt as if she could not bear the light to shine upon their grief, and Thomas, who had lived with Mr. Stanley from his boyhood, withdrew, the tears silently coursing down his furrowed cheeks. How much longer they sat they knew not; no word was spoken, but silent prayers went up from their over-charged hearts. At length Laura started up, exclaiming, "I hear the sound of wheels at a distance!"

"It is only some cart in the lane," replied Bella. "But, hush! it is plainer, nearer, and see, a fly is coming up the avenue. Nearer still. It stops."

The door is already opened, for Thomas had heard the sound. Laura, with frantic joy, screams, "Papa!" and Mr. Stanley is clasped in the arms of his wife and daughters.

"Thank God," cries Mrs. Stanley, "you are safe! Thank God!" she repeated, her eyes overflowing now with the tears she had so long restrained.

When they had recovered some degree of composure, Mrs. Stanley asked him how he had escaped the destruction of the train?

"By not being in it," he replied. "I reached Coniston by two p.m., and was rather annoyed at not meeting you there. I would have proceeded to Alford by the next train, but Lady Marchmont insisted on my staying to dinner. After which, Sir John took me into his library to look at some plans for cottages on his estate. Providentially I complied; and by that means missed the six and three-quarters train. I, therefore, returned in a fly, which Sir John sent for from the station. This will account for my arriving later than you expected."

When the events of the morning were related to Mr. Stanley, he said, "We have reason to be truly thankful that the affair happened so; for had we come home by that train, as we intended to have done, our fate might have been the same as that of many others who started well and cheerful, and are now either sleeping in death, or suffering agonies inconceivable."

"How thankful I am that we did not go," said Laura. "I see now how wicked I was to be angry when God was so good and so merciful to us, and everything was ordered so much for the best."

M. W.

SCRIPTURE ACROSTIC.

A RIVER OF DAMASCUS.

1. One who was rewarded for his zeal in suppressing idolatry.
2. One who found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.
3. A fellow-prisoner with St. Paul.
4. Where Uriah was slain.
5. Where St. Paul tarried one week.
6. A skilful artificer.
7. One who comforted a king in his old age.
8. A city of ancient Assyria, between Nineveh and Calah.